1
LEVEL

Tafsir

Quranic Exegesis

العبيكان للتعليم
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Tafsir

Quranic Exegesis

Level 1

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Mob: +966 50 444 6432, Tel: +966 12 6929242
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www.zadgroup.net

Distribution

KSA - Riyadh
King Fahd Road, Al-Olayia
Tel: +966 11 4808654, Fax: +966 11 4808095
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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Preface

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and blessings and peace be upon the noblest of the Prophets and Messengers, our Prophet Muhammad, and upon all his family and Companions. To proceed:

Islamic knowledge is one of the most important necessities that the Muslim needs in his life; the entire ummah, in its efforts to rebuild Islamic civilization, is in need of it. Hence the religious texts point out the importance of Islamic knowledge and its bearers. Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge – [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise}* [Aal Imran 3:18]. Ash-Shawkani رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ said: What is meant by those of knowledge here is the scholars of the Quran and Sunnah. And Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{and say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge"}* [Ta-Ha 20:114].

In the hadith it says: **«Whoever follows a path seeking knowledge thereby, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise.»** Narrated by Muslim.

This series of textbooks comes to serve the community, with the aim of conveying Islamic knowledge by various methods and making it readily available to those who seek it. We hope that it will be another source of knowledge for academic programs and that it will be a support and help to those who want to acquire more Islamic knowledge and education, in an effort to achieve the main goal, which is to spread and instill sound Islamic knowledge on a sound academic foundation and in accordance with correct beliefs, based on the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, in a modern and easily-understood style. We ask Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ to grant us all beneficial knowledge, enable us to do righteous deeds, guide us and help us to be sincere in our efforts.

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The Zad
Academy Series

Tafsir
Quranic Exegesis
Level 1

1

Introduction

In this unit we will study

- What is ilm at-tafsir
- Foundations of ilm at-tafsir
- Development of ilm at-tafsir
- Books of tafsir
- Methodologies of the mufassireen

Definition of ilm at-tafsir

Definition of tafsir in linguistic terms:

In linguistic terms, the Arabic word tafsir means clarification and explanation. It is taken from the root word fasr which means making clear and uncovering.

It says in al-Qamus: Fasr means making clear and disclosing something that was covered.

It is also said asfara as-subh (lit. the dawn has become bright) when the morning grows light.

This word is also seen in the verse: *{And they do not come to you with an argument except that We bring you the truth and the best explanation [ahsana tafsira]}* [al-Furqan 25:33].

Definition of tafsir in Islamic terminology:

Expounding the word of Allah or: the branch of knowledge through which the Book of Allah is understood, its meanings are explained, rulings are derived and lessons are learned.

Another name for tafsir is: ta'weel (interpretation), which is taken from the root word awl, which means reviewing or revising.

It says in al-Qamus that the phrase aala ilayhi means he returned or came back, and aala anhu means he left. The phrase awwala al-kalama ta'weelan (lit. he interpreted the words) means: he reflected upon them and explained their meaning.

The phrase awwala al-ayah means he interpreted the verse: meaning that he explained it and expounded its meanings.

This word (ta'weel) appears in the hadith in which the Prophet ﷺ said concerning Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهما, offering supplication for him:

«O Allah, enable him to understand issues of religion and teach him ta'weel (interpretation)» meaning tafsir. And he (Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهما) became known as the scholar of the ummah (hibr al-ummah) and the interpreter of the Quran (tarjuman al-Quran). Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Activities

1. **Give a definition of tafsir both in linguistic terms and in Islamic terminology, explaining the difference between it and ta'weel.**
2. **Based on your own reading, what is blameworthy ta'weel?**

The foundations of ilm at-tafsir

Ilm at-tafsir is based on the following:

1. The Quran
2. The Sunnah
3. Reports from the Sahabah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ
4. Arabic language, grammar (nahw) and morphology (sarf)
5. Rhetoric (ilm al-bayan)
6. Principles of Islamic jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh)
7. Modes of recitation of the Quran (qira'aat)
8. Reasons for revelation (asbab an-nuzul)
9. That which abrogates and that which is abrogated (an-nasikh wa'l-mansukh)

Activities

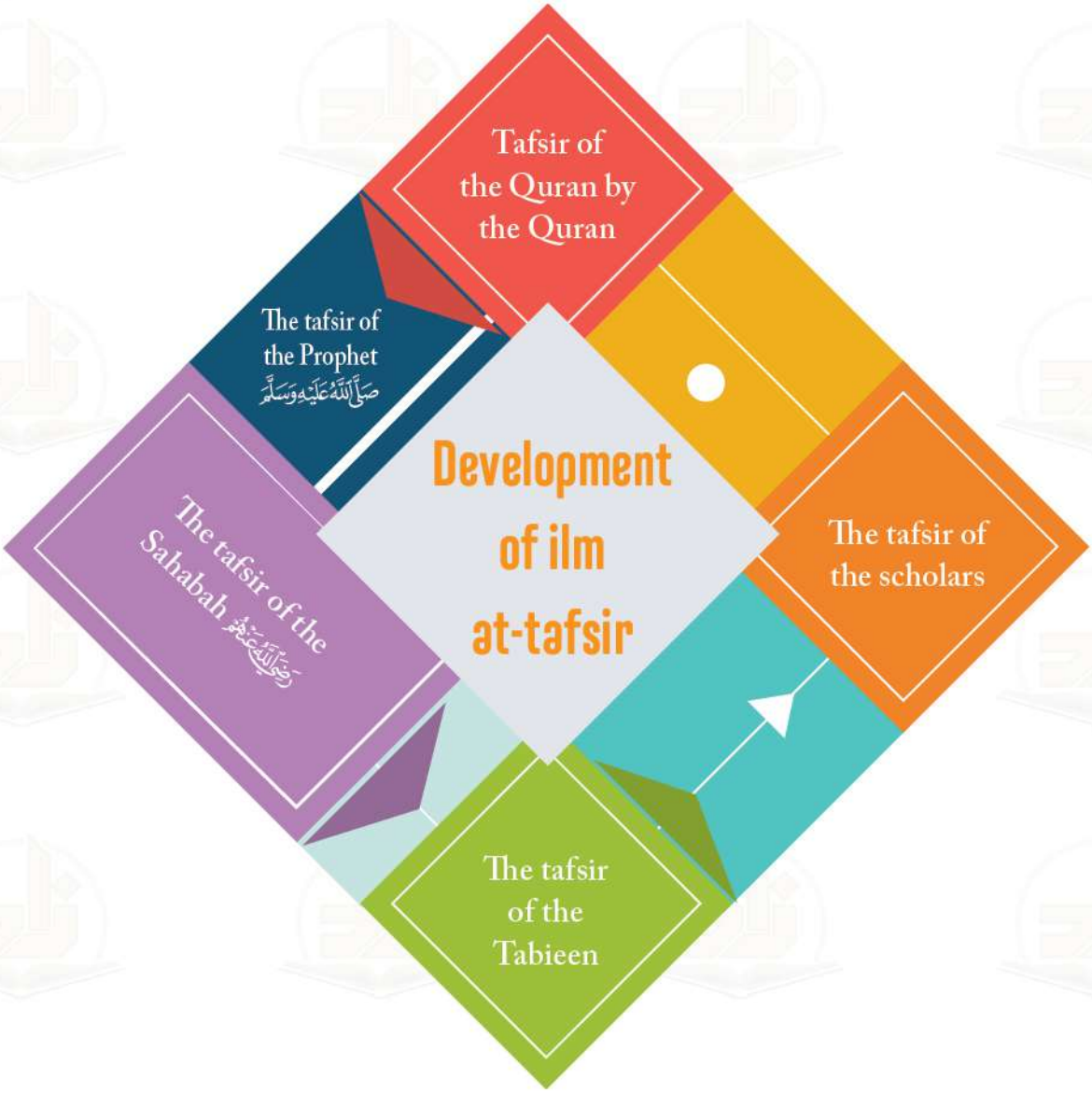
1. **List in brief what ilm at-tafsir is based on.**

.....

2. **How could knowledge of the modes of recitation be useful in the field of tafsir?**

.....

Development of ilm at-tafsir



The development of tafsir passed through five stages, as follows:

1

1. Tafsir of the Quran by the Quran:

Ilm at-tafsir is, of necessity, connected to the Noble Quran, and emerged with its revelation. Some of the Quran is clear and unambiguous, and some of it is ambiguous and requires clarification, so the words that were revealed after such verses explain them.

For example, Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{The Striking Calamity. What is the Striking Calamity? And what can make you know what is the Striking Calamity? It is the Day when people will be like moths, dispersed}* [al-Qari'ah 101:1-4].

And He says: *{Indeed, mankind was created anxious. When evil touches him, impatient. And when good touches him, withholding [of it]}* [al-Ma'arij 70:19-21]. Here, the word anxious (haloo') is explained in the verses that follow it.

Explaining some parts of the Quran by other parts is the first method of tafsir. There are many examples of that in the Book of Allah.

2

2. The tafsir of the Prophet ﷺ:

The Prophet ﷺ used to explain that of the Book of Allah which was revealed in brief or ambiguous terms, and he would explain in specific terms that which had been mentioned in general terms, such as the verse, *{and establish prayer and give zakaah}* [an-Nisa 4:77]. These words are very brief, but were explained in detail by the Prophet ﷺ, who taught us about the five obligatory prayers, how they are to be performed, and the number of rakahs and he said: **«Pray as you have seen me praying.»** Narrated by al-Bukhari.

And the Prophet ﷺ explained what was meant by the word "extra (ziyadah)" in the verse *{For them who have done good is the best [reward] and extra}* [Yunus 10:26] as referring to gazing upon the noble Countenance of Allah, as was narrated by Muslim.

Activities

1. **Give an example of how the Quran is explained by the Quran and how the Quran is explained by the Sunnah, other than those mentioned above.**

.....

2. **The scholars differed concerning the issue of gazing upon the Countenance of Allah on the Day of Resurrection. Give a brief overview of this issue.**

.....

3

3. The tafsir of the Sahabah رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ:

One of the greatest methodologies of tafsir is the tafsir of the Sahabah رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. Their method was to start, first of all, by explaining the Quran by the Quran; then by the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ; then by examining other issues connected to it, such as the reasons for revelation and so on. They would interpret it on the basis of their own understanding, or in accordance with the linguistic meaning of words in the Arabic language.

One example of that is the verse, *{or you have contacted [lit. touched] women}* [an-Nisa 4:43]. Ibn Katheer narrated in his tafsir that Ibn Abbas said: [What is meant is] intercourse.

And it was narrated that Ibn Abbas رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا said, concerning the verse, *{He knows the secret and what is [even] more hidden}* [Ta-Ha 20:7]: The secret (as-sirr) is what you did, and what is [even] more hidden (akhfa) is that which Allah causes to cross your mind but you do not act on it.

Ibn Mas'ud رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ said concerning the verse, *{until, when terror is removed from their hearts}* [Saba 34:23]: When the Lord of the Throne decrees something, those of the angels who are close to Him hear a sound like a chain being dragged over a rock, and they swoon. Then when terror is removed from their hearts, they call out: *{What has your Lord said?}* [Saba 34:23]. And whoever Allah wills says: "The truth. And He is the Most High, the Grand."

4

4. The tafsir of the Tabieen:

Then the Tabieen learned this branch of knowledge from the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and they interpreted the Quran following the same method as the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم, as in the case of the verse in which Allah عز وجل says: *{And those who believed and whose descendants followed them in faith – We will join with them their descendants, and We will not deprive them of anything of their deeds}* [at-Tur 52:21]. Saeed ibn Jubayr said: That is, Allah عز وجل will cause the offspring to join their parents in the higher levels [of Paradise], even though they deserve a lower rank than their parents in Paradise, as an honour to their parents and as a gracious favour from Him عز وجل. He learned that from Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهما, who said: Allah will raise the offspring of the believer to his level [in Paradise], even if the offspring's deeds deserved less, so as to bring joy to the parents.

Activities

1. **Based on your own readings, give examples of the tafsir of the Sahabah and Tabieen.**

.....

.....

2. **What may be understood from the verse in which Allah عز وجل says:** *{And those who believed and whose descendants followed them in faith}* [at-Tur 52:21]?

.....

5

5. The tafsir of the scholars:

The scholars followed the methodology mentioned above, interpreting the Book of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ through the Quran the Sunnah, and the words of the Sahabah and Tabieen. If they did not find an explanation in any of these sources, they would interpret it on the basis of the Arabic language and its meanings.

Most of the books of tafsir that have come down to us are of this nature. The scholars compiled their commentaries in books devoted exclusively to tafsir, in which they quoted what was narrated from the Messenger صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, the Sahabah and the Tabieen, as well as what they worked out themselves and the conclusions they reached.

Many scholars became famous for their commentaries on the Book of Allah, including the following:

- Muhammad ibn Jareer at-Tabari
- Al-Husayn ibn Mas'ud al-Baghawi
- Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qurtubi
- Ibn Abi Hatim
- Ismail ibn Umar ibn Katheer
- Jalal ad-Deen ibn Abi Bakr as-Suyuti
- Muhammad ibn Ali ash-Shawkani

Activities

1. **Give a brief description of methodologies of tafsir.**
2. **How can the scholars explain the Quran through the Quran? Is it possible to explain the Quran on the basis of personal opinion? Write an essay on that.**

Books of tafsir

- Jami‘ al-Bayan
- Tafsir al-Quran al-Azeem
- Ma‘alim at-Tanzeel
- Ad-Durr al-Manthur fi’t-Tafsir bi’l-Ma’thur
- al-Jami‘ li Ahkam al-Quran
- Fath al-Qadeer

Jami‘ al-Bayan fi Ta’weel al-Quran

- **Author: The Shaykh of the Mufassireen Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn Jareer at-Tabari**
- **d. 310 AH**

This tafsir is one of the greatest of tafsirs that are based on reports. It is one of the best and one of those that are held in the highest esteem.

In it, the author quotes what was narrated of tafsir from the Prophet ﷺ, the Sahabah the Tabieen and those who followed them.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ said: As for the tafsirs that the people have, the soundest of them is the Tafsir of Ibn Jareer at-Tabari, for in it he quotes the views of the Salaf with proven isnads (chains of narration); there are no innovations (bidahs) in it, and he does not quote from any dubious figures.

But one of the downsides of this great Tafsir is that the author narrates many Israeeliyat (reports from Jewish sources) from Ka‘b al-Ahbar, Wahb ibn Munabbih, Ibn Jurayj, as-Suddi and others.

Tafsir al-Quran al-Azeem

- **Author: Imad ad-Deen Abi'l-Fida Ismail ibn Umar ibn Katheer**
- **d. 774 AH**

This tafsir is one of the most famous of the tafsirs that are based on reports. It comes second to the book of Ibn Jareer at-Tabari. In it, the author focused on narrating from the commentators (mufassireen) of the salaf.

What makes this Tafsir stand out is the fact that its author alerts the reader to odd reports from Jewish sources (Israeeliyat), and highlights the flaws in their chains of narration and their texts, warning against them in general and specific terms.

Activities

1. **Some scholars mentioned some reservations about the Tafsir of Ibn Jareer; list them.**
2. **Compare and contrast the Tafsir of Ibn Jareer and the Tafsir of Ibn Katheer رَحِمَهُمَا ٱللَّهُ.**

Ma'alim at-Tanzeel [Tafsir al-Baghawi]

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ was asked which of these tafsirs was closest to the Quran and Sunnah.

Was it az-Zamakhshari?

Or al-Qurtubi?

Or al-Baghawi?

He said in his Fatawa: As for the three Tafsirs asked about, the soundest of them and the most free of innovations and weak hadiths is al-Baghawi, but it is a summary of the Tafsir of ath-Thalabi; he omitted from it the fabricated hadiths and innovations that it contained, and omitted other things from it.

This Tafsir is regarded as an abridgement of Tafsir ath-Tha'labi, but its author eliminated from it the fabricated hadiths and reports from Jewish sources (Israeeliyat).

al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Quran

- **Author: Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abi Bakr ibn Farah al-Qurtubi**
- **d. 671 AH**

What makes the Tafsir of al-Qurtubi stand out is the fact that he does not show fanatical commitment to any particular fiqhi madhab (school of thought of Islamic jurisprudence), especially the Maliki madhab. Hence with regard to some issues, you will find him quoting the view of Imam Malik, then supporting another view that has stronger evidence.

His methodology is to quote a Quranic passage, then explain the passage by raising a number of issues that the text may be referring to, and there may be many issues. Then for each issue, he mentions what rulings there are on the basis of the same verse. Because of his vast knowledge, he may mention differences of opinion on some fiqhi issues, or the reasons for revelation, or strange interpretations that have been given for the verse, and so on.

Activities

1. **Describe the methodology of al-Qurtubi in his Tafsir, and compare and contrast it with the methodology of Ibn Jareer at-Tabari and that of al-Baghawi.**

.....

Ad-Durr al-Manthur fi't-Tafsir bi'l-Ma'thur

- Author: Jalal ad-Deen ibn Abi Bakr ibn Muhammad as-Suyuti
- d. 911 AH

As-Suyuti's usual methodology in his Tafsir is to quote reports from the salaf without commenting on them, and without verifying, amending or alerting the reader to the weakness of the report, except in rare instances. Most of what he relies on are the reports of Imam al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, an-Nasai, at-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, ad-Darimi, and others.

Activities

1. **Write briefly about the Tafsirs of al-Baghawi and as-Suyuti, comparing the two.**
2. **What stands out most for you with regard to the tafsir ad-Durr al-Manthur?**

Fath al-Qadeer

- **Author: Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abdillah ash-Shawkani**
- **d. 1250 AH**

The author's methodology in this tafsir is to mention what may be said about the verse from a linguistic point of view and on the basis of sound Arabic language and grammar. Then he analyses the grammar (i'raab), if that has an impact on the meaning. Then he refers to modes of recitation (qira'aat) of the verse, then sometimes he discusses differences regarding fiqhi views and examines the evidence for these views, suggesting which he thinks is more correct.

Thus in his Tafsir he combines narration from the early generations with his own understanding on the basis of evidence, discussions and examining what is more correct in terms of reports and views.

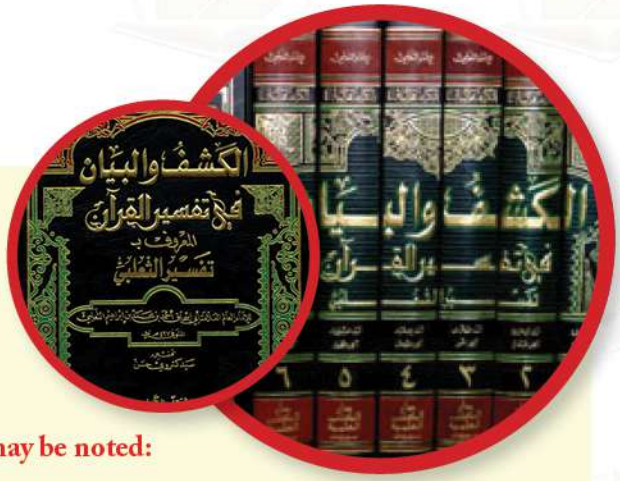
Activities

1. **Based on your own reading, write briefly about the tafsir book Fath al-Qadeer, with no more than two lines.**
2. **Based on what you have studied, what are the most important books of tafsir, and what is the most outstanding feature of each of them?**

Books of tafsir of which one should be cautious

There are some books of tafsir that not everyone can or should read, especially beginners in the pursuit of knowledge. Some may become confused by their contents and drift away from the right path, especially with regard to aqeedah (belief, doctrine). These books include the following:

al-Kashf wa'l-Bayan 'an Tafsir al-Quran



- Author: Abu Ishaq Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ath-Tha'labi
- d. 427 AH

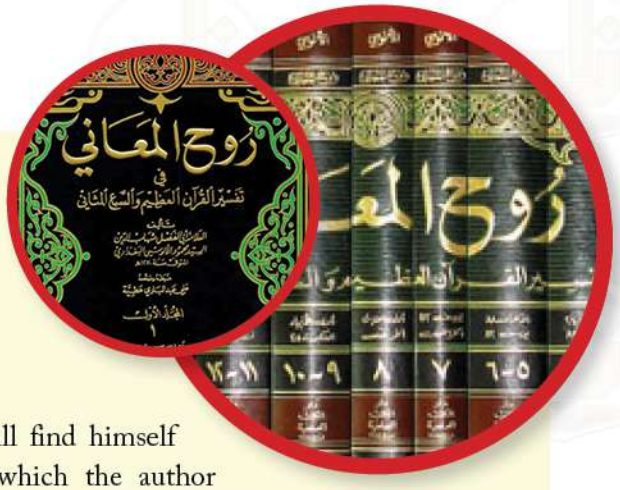
With regard to this tafsir, the following may be noted:

- The author often quotes reports from Jewish sources, without comment, and also mentions some weird stories from Jewish sources.
- He was misled by fabricated hadiths about the virtues of certain surahs, so at the end of each surah he quotes a hadith about its virtues and attributes that to Ubay ibn Ka'b.
- He was misled by many fabricated hadiths that were in circulation among the Shia, without pointing out that they are fabricated and false.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said in his introduction to Usul at-Tafsir:

Ath-Tha'labi in and of himself was good and religiously committed, but he did not know what he was doing; he narrated whatever he found in the books of tafsir, regardless of whether it was sound (sahih), weak (daeef) or fabricated (mawdu).

Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsir al-Quran al-Azeem wa's-Sab' al-Mathani



- **Author: Abu'th-Thana' Shihab ad-Deen as-Sayyid Mahmoud Afandi al-Alusi**
- **d. 1270 AH**

This is a large tafsir; whoever looks at it will find himself reading a huge encyclopaedia of tafsir in which the author compiled many views on tafsir. He referred to a huge number of tafsirs, including the tafsirs of Abu's-Su'ud, al-Baydawi and the tafsir of al-Fakhr ar-Razi. He also quoted from the tafsirs of Ibn Atiyah, Abu Hayyan, az-Zamakhshari, Ibn Katheer, and others.

Benefit

The problem with this tafsir is that the author showed interest in tafsirs based on Sufi symbolism. When he finishes commenting on a passage on the basis of the apparent meaning, he then discusses the hidden meaning, quoting from Sufis such as al-Junayd, Ibn Ataa and Abu'l-Abbas al-Mursi, which are odd interpretations that are farthest removed from the truth.

Activities

1. **Write briefly about the scholarly reservations regarding the Tafsir of ath-Tha'labi.**
2. **What do you know about tafsir based on Sufi symbolism, and why it is blameworthy?**

Methodologies of tafsir

Tafsir based on reports (ma'thur)

- Tafsir of the Quran by the Quran
- Tafsir of the Quran by the Sunnah
- The tafsir of the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم
- The tafsir of the Tabieen

Tafsir based on opinion (ra'i)

- Tafsir based on blameworthy opinion
- Tafsir based on praiseworthy opinion

The methodology of the mufassireen, after examining tafsirs, is almost limited to two methods:

1. Tafsir based on reports

This is where the mufassir limits himself to what is narrated about the meaning of a verse from the Prophet ﷺ or from the Sahabah and Tabieen, which he quotes without adding anything to it, apart from a few words to make it clearer when needed, or when trying to reconcile between different views mentioned in reports that speak about the meaning of the verse. And he avoids deriving his own understanding and conclusions as much as possible.

This method may be divided into four categories, which have been mentioned above under the heading of development of tafsir. They are, in brief:

1. Tafsir of the Quran by the Quran
2. Tafsir of the Quran by the Sunnah
3. The tafsir of the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم
4. The tafsir of the Tabieen

The most famous books of tafsir based on reports are:

1. Jami' al-Bayan fi Ta'weel al-Quran, by Ibn Jareer at-Tabari.
2. Ma'alim at-Tanzeel by al- Baghawi.
3. Tafsir al-Quran al-Azeem by Ibn Katheer.
4. Ad-Durr al-Manthur fi't-Tafsir bi'l-Ma'thur by as-Suyuti.

2. Tafsir based on opinion

This refers to when the mufassir comments on the basis of his own understanding and on the basis of conclusions founded on principles of sharia and the Arabic language.

It is permissible to comment on the Quran on the basis of personal opinion for one who has knowledge of the Arabic language and its grammar, morphology and rhetoric; what abrogates and is abrogated in the Quran an-nasikh wa'l-mansukh; the reasons for revelation; the Sunnah, both sound (sahih) and weak (daeef) reports; and the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh).

It is haram to comment on Quran on the basis of personal opinion for one who does not meet the conditions mentioned above.

Tafsir on the basis of opinion is of two types:

1. Blameworthy opinion:

This refers to cases where the only motive is to pursue whims and desires, or the fact that the one who is giving such commentary has no knowledge and no understanding. This is something that it is not permissible for anyone to do, namely giving a personal view on any religious matters whatsoever. Allah تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَىٰ says:

{And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned} [al-Isra 17:36] and *{Say, "My Lord has only forbidden immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed - and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allah that which you do not know"}* [al-A'raf 7:33].

2. Praiseworthy opinion:

This is opinion that is based on academic foundations, namely knowledge of the Arabic language and of Islamic teachings, and is in accordance with clear and precise guidelines. This is a good method.

The evidence for it being permissible to give one's own praiseworthy opinion concerning the meaning of a verse is what may be understood from the verses quoted above, and other evidence for the prohibition on giving a blameworthy opinion. This is because all of it indicates that speaking without knowledge is not permissible, and implies that speaking on the basis of knowledge is permissible.

The most famous books of tafsir based on opinion:

1. **Mafateeh al-Ghayb by al-Fakhr ar-Razi.**
2. **Irshad al-Aql as-Saleem ila Mazaya al-Kitab al-Kareem by Abu's-Su'ud.**
3. **Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsir al-Quran al-Azeem wa's-Sab' al-Mathani by al-Alusi.**

Activities

1. Using a mind map, explain the methodologies of tafsir.

2. Give examples of books of tafsir based on opinion and tafsir based on reports.

.....

.....

3. Is it possible for tafsir based on opinion to be praiseworthy? Base your discussion of that on other sources.

.....

.....

2

Surat al-Fatihah

In this unit we will study

Surat al-Fatihah

Its virtues

Al-Bukhari narrated that the prophet ﷺ said to Abu Saeed ibn al-Mu'alla رضي الله عنه: «I shall surely teach you a surah which is the greatest surah in the Quran: *{al-hamdu Lillahi Rabb il-'aalameen [[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds]}*. It is seven of the often repeated [verses] and the great Quran which I have been given.»

Its names

Al-hamd (praise); as-sab' al-mathani (seven of the often repeated [verses]); umm al-kitab (the essence of the Book), umm al-Quran (the essence of the Quran) – that is because the meanings of the Noble Quran are all connected to it. The most famous of its names is al-Fatihah (the opening).

The most important lessons that we learn from it

- It affirms two of the names of Allah عز وجل, and highlights the fact that His Lordship (rububiyah) is based on His vast mercy.
- It affirms that all sovereignty will belong to Allah عز وجل on the Day of Resurrection.
- It exhorts people, by reminding them of the Day of Resurrection, so that they will strive to do that which will save them on that Day.

Its most important topics

- Praise of Allah عز وجل.
- Attribution of mercy and sovereignty to Him.
- The fact that He Alone is to be worshipped and His help Alone is to be sought.
- We should seek guidance from Allah تبارك وتعالى to the straight path, the path of those upon whom Allah has bestowed favour.

Surat al-Fatihah is a Makki surah (i.e., it was revealed before the Hijrah).

﴿بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ ١ ٱلۡحَمۡدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ ٱلۡعَٰلَمِينَ ٢ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ
ٱلرَّحِيمِ ٣ مَٰلِكِ يَوۡمِ ٱلدِّينِ ٤ إِيَّاكَ نَعۡبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسۡتَعِينُ ٥
ٱهۡدِنَا ٱلصِّرَٰطَ ٱلۡمُسۡتَقِيمَ ٦ صِرَٰطَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَنۡعَمۡتَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ غَيۡرِ ٱلۡمَغۡضُوبِ
عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَلَا ٱلضَّآلِّينَ ٧﴾ [الفاتحة]

{In the name of Allah , the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful [All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful Sovereign of the Day of Recompense. It is You we worship and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path. The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray} [Surat al-Fatihah].

Surat al-Fatihah is also called Al-hamd (praise); as-sab' al-mathani (seven of the often repeated [verses]); umm al-kitab (the essence of the Book), and umm al-Quran (the essence of the Quran), because the meanings of the Holy Quran are all connected to it.

The most famous of its names is al-Fatihah (the opening).

It was said that it is so called, because the Quran opens (or begins) with it, or because al-Fatihah was the first surah that was revealed of the Quran.

It was also said that the first verse to be revealed was *{O you who covers himself [with a garment]}* [al-Muddaththir 74:1].

And it was said that the first verse to be revealed was *{Recite in the name of your Lord who created}* [al-Alaq 96:1]. This is the correct view.

The virtues of this surah.

A number of sound hadiths have been narrated concerning its virtues.

It was narrated that Ibn Abbas رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا said: Whilst Jibreel عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ was sitting with the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, he heard a creaking sound from above him. He raised his head and said: **«This is a gate in heaven that has been opened today; it has never been opened before today, and an angel has come down from it. This is an angel who has come down to earth, and he has never come down before today. He [the angel who had just come down] spoke words of greeting and said: "Glad tidings of two lights that have been given to you and were never given to any prophet before you: the Opening of the Book and the closing verses of Surat al-Baqarah. You will never recite one letter of them but you will be given (reward)."»** Narrated by Muslim.

Al-Bukhari narrated that the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said to Abu Saeed ibn al-Mu'alla رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: **«I shall surely teach you a surah which is the greatest surah in the Quran:** *{al-hamdu Lillahi Rabb il-'aalameen [[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds]}*. **It is seven of the often repeated [verses] and the great Quran which I have been given.»**

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ that Ubay رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ recited the Essence of the Quran [al-Fatihah] before the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and he said: **«By the One in Whose hand is my soul, nothing like it has been revealed in the Torah or in the Gospel or in az-Zabur or in al-Furqan [the Quran]. Indeed it is seven of the often repeated [verses] and the great Quran which I have been given.»** Narrated by Ahmad; classed as sahih by Shuayb al-Arna'ut.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said: I heard the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ say: **«Allah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ said: 'I have divided the prayer into two parts between Me and My slave, and My slave shall have what he asked for. When the slave says:** *{[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds}*, **Allah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ says: My slave has praised Me. When he says** *{The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful}*, **Allah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ says: My slave has praised Me. When he says,** *{Sovereign of the Day of Recompense}*, **Allah says: My slave has glorified Me. When he says:** *{It is You we worship and You we ask for help}*, **He says: This is between Me and My slave, and My slave will have what he asked for. When he says:** *{Guide us to the straight path, The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray}*, **Allah says: This is for My slave, and My slave will have what he asked for.»** Narrated by Muslim.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said: The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: **«Whoever offers a prayer in which he does not recite the Essence of the Book (al-Fatihah), it is defective, it is defective, it is defective, not complete.»** Narrated by Muslim.

﴿ٱلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ ۝٢ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ ۝٣﴾

{[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds, The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful}

{[All] praise} the word translated here as praise, al-hamd, means praising Allah for having all perfect attributes, and for His actions that reflect His grace and justice; to Him be perfect praise in all respects.

It was said that to describe the praised one as being perfect should be accompanied by **love and veneration**, and this condition of love and veneration is essential. That is because merely attributing perfection to Him, if it is not accompanied by love and veneration, cannot be called praise *(hamd)*; rather it can only be called commendation (madh).

We praise Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ with praise that is based on love and veneration.

The definite article al- in the word al-hamd indicates that all types of praise are included.

{is [due] to Allah}. This name, Allah, cannot be given to anyone except Him. What it means is al-ma'luh that is, the One Who is worshipped on the basis of love and veneration, Who Alone deserves to be worshipped, because of what He possesses of divine attributes.

The preposition li (to) [in the word Lillahi] indicates that it belongs only to Him and He Alone is deserving of it.

{Lord of the worlds [Rabb il-'aalameen]} – the Rabb (Lord) is the one who possesses three attributes: **the power of creation, sovereignty and control**.

Thus He is the Creator of all things, the Sovereign of all things, **the Controller** of all affairs.

In linguistic terms, the word rabb may refer to a master **(sayyid)**, and to the one **who disposes of affairs in the best interests**. All of that is true in the case of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ.

As-Sa'di رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ said: Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, as Lord of the worlds (Rabb al-Aalamin), cares for His creation, and His care for them is of two types, general and specific.

In general terms:

It refers to His creation of all creatures, His granting of provision to them and His guiding them to that which is in their best interests, which enables them to survive in this world.

In specific terms:

It refers to His caring for His close friends, by means of instilling faith in their hearts, guiding them to it, and warding off from them distractions and obstacles that come between them and faith. In real terms, this means guiding them to everything that is good and protecting them from everything that is bad. Perhaps it is for this reason that most of the supplications of the Prophets used the word Lord (Rabb), since all their requests and needs came under His special care.

{the worlds}. the Arabic word aalamin (translated here as the worlds) is the plural of aalam which refers to everything that exists besides Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ. Aalam is a plural form for which no singular exists.

{the Entirely Merciful [ar-Rahmaan]} . Possessor of vast mercy; in other words, the One Whose mercy reaches the utmost limit. This is one of the attributes of Allah.

{the Especially Merciful [ar-Raheem]} . Possessor of mercy that reaches people. What this refers to is the way in which He deals with His creation.

So He is entirely merciful (Rahman) in His essence, especially merciful (Raheem) to His creation. This applies when these two names (ar-Rahman, ar-Raheem) are mentioned together in a verse.

But if only one of the two is mentioned, then it includes the other. So when the name ar-Rahman (the Entirely Merciful) is mentioned on its own, what is meant is both the attribute and the action. The same may be said of the name ar-Raheem (the Especially Merciful).

This attribute includes all meanings of mercy.

What we learn from these two verses:

1. The verses affirm these two divine names of Allah, *{The Entirely Merciful [ar-Rahmaan], the Especially Merciful [ar-Raheem]}*, and indicate that His Lordship (Rububiyah) is based on His vast mercy and is manifested by way of mercy, gentleness and kindness, not by way of harshness, harming and causing hardship.

2. Saying *{The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful} after {Lord of the worlds [Rabb il-'Aalameen]}* is giving hope after giving a warning, because the Lord [ar-Rabb] is the Almighty, the Most Strong, and following a warning with a message of hope is more effective in helping people to persist in obeying and worshipping Allah.

Activities

1. Why did Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ follow the words *{Lord of the worlds}* with *{The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful}*?

.....

.....

2. Why did the Prophet ﷺ use the words Rabb (Lord) or Rabbana (our Lord) in his supplication (dua)?

.....

.....

3. Choose the correct answer:

- Ar-Rahman (the Entirely Merciful) means:
  (the forgiver of sins) – (the one Who has the attribute of mercy) – (the One Who causes mercy to reach His slaves).
- Allah's granting provision (rizq) to His slaves is part of:
  (His general mercy) – (His specific mercy).
- Ar-Rabb (the Lord) means:
  (the One Who is worshipped) – (the One to Whom you turn) – (the Creator and Controller).

4. Correct the following:

- If the word ar-Rahman (the Entirely Merciful) appears on its own, it does not include the meaning of ar-Raheem (the Especially Merciful).

.....

- There is a singular form of the word al-aalam.

.....

{Sovereign of the Day of Recompense} ﴿ مَٰلِكِ يَوۡمِ ٱلدِّينِ ﴾

The words **"Maaliki yawm id-deen (Sovereign of the Day of Recompense)"** are how this verse is recited according to the most well-known mode of recitation.

In another mode of recitation, it is pronounced as **"Maliki yawm id-deen."** Both recitations are sound and are narrated via mutawatir reports as being among the seven modes of recitation.

To Allah will belong complete sovereignty on that Day, on which no one else will have any sovereignty alongside Allah.

{Recompense (ad-deen)} – here the word deen means requital and reckoning. It is used in a similar manner in the verse, *{Then why do you not, if you are not to be recompensed [madeeneen]…}* [al-Waqi'ah 56:86] ; that is, brought to account.

Benefit

The word "deen" may refer to law and religion, and this is the usual way in which this word is used. Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{Indeed, the religion [ad-deen] in the sight of Allah is Islam}* [Aal Imran 3:19], meaning the sound religion.

The religion with which Allah sent all the Messengers is Islam, beginning with Adam, including the Messengers of strong will, namely Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa and Isa, and ending with Muhammad صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. There is a great deal of evidence for that in the Quran.

The often-repeated phrase "the three heavenly religions" is not valid; rather the only valid and sound religion before Allah is Islam, and all others are false and invalid.

The religion is one, although laws may vary [from one messenger to another]. *{To each of you We prescribed a law and a method}* [al-Ma'idah 5:48].

The fact that Allah's sovereignty is mentioned in particular with regard to the Day of Recompense does not mean that He is not the sovereign of other days and times, for He has already stated that He is the Lord of the worlds, which is applicable to both this world and the Hereafter. Rather He is described as the Sovereign of the Day of Recompense because on that Day no one will have any sovereignty whatsoever except Him.

What we learn from the verse:

1. It affirms absolute sovereignty for Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ on the Day of Resurrection.

2. It exhorts people by reminding them of the Day of Resurrection, so that each person will strive to do that which will save him on that Day, and to take precautions and prepare himself for it.

3. Allah's sovereignty will become clear to all of His creation on the Day of Resurrection. *{To whom belongs [all] sovereignty this Day? To Allah, the One, the Prevailing}* [Ghafir 40:16].

4. The sovereignty of all creatures will vanish on the Day of Resurrection, and Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ Alone will have all sovereignty.

Activities

1. **Mention some meanings of the word deen, quoting as evidence Quranic verses.**
2. **Why is it said that Allah is the Sovereign of the Day of Recompense, when He is sovereign of all things, at all times?**
3. **How valid is the following statement?**

   "Judaism, Christianity and Islam are three heavenly religions."

{It is You we worship and You we ask for help} ﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ﴾

{It is You we worship} that is, We humble ourselves before You completely.

Worship (ibadah) includes everything that Allah loves and is pleased with, of deeds and actions both outward and inward.

The slave (abd) is the one who complies with what the One Who is worshipped wants from him, as described in the religious texts. The one who is not like that is not a worshipper (aabid).

Benefit

Worship cannot be valid or accepted unless it is done sincerely for the sake of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ and in accordance with the teachings of the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. Whoever introduces any innovation into the religion of Allah has not attained the true servitude (ubudiyah) that Allah wants from His slaves.

This verse limits all worship and all seeking help to Allah Alone, as is indicated by putting the word iyyaka *{it is You}* before the word na'budu *{we worship}*.

As a person cannot worship his Lord without guidance and help from Allah, seeking help is also mentioned immediately after that, as the verse says:

{and You we ask for help}. **Asking for help** is seeking aid and relying on Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ to bring benefit and ward off harm, whilst putting one's trust in Him to attain that.

What is meant is: we do not worship any except You, and we do not put our trust in anyone except You – and that is what perfect obedience is.

The entire religion may be summed up in these two concepts: worship (ibadah) and trust in Allah (tawakkul).

One of the salaf said: al-Fatihah is the essence of the Quran, and the essence of al-Fatihah is: *{It is You we worship and You we ask for help}*.

The first phrase is a disavowal of shirk [association of others with Allah], and the second phrase is a disavowal of having any power or strength.

The shift from the third person to the second person is because, after praising Allah, it is as if the worshipper has drawn closer and is now standing before Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ. Hence he speaks in the second person, and says *{It is You ...}*.

What we learn from the verse:

1. The individual is not able to worship Allah unless Allah helps him to do that. This is a precautionary measure to help him avoid self-admiration and conceit, which may affect some of those who do a great deal of worship.

2. The verse indicates that it is not appropriate to rely on anyone except the One Who is deserving of worship, as Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{so worship Him and rely upon Him}* [Hud 11:123].

3. The word **"we worship (na'budu)"** indicates that the individual is doing that voluntarily, and that he wants to do it. This is a refutation of the Jabaris who say that man has no free will, and that he is compelled to do what he does.

4. The individual cannot act except with the help of Allah and by His will and His enabling him to do that deed. This is a refutation of the Qadaris who say that a man creates his own actions by himself, independently of Allah and His will.

5. Help is to be sought exclusively from Allah in matters over which no one has power except Him, and seeking help in the sense of delegating all one's affairs should be directed exclusively to Allah. However, it is permissible to seek help from people with regard to matters in which they are able to help.

Activities

1. What are the conditions of worship being valid and acceptable?

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.....

2. Why does Allah تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَىٰ mention worship and seeking help together?

.....

.....

3. Choose the right answer:

- The essence of al-Fatihah is: [All] praise is:
  ([due] to Allah – It is You we worship – Guide us to the straight path).
- The innovator:
  (will be rewarded) – (has done an obligatory action) – (is a disobedient sinner).

4. Explain why, if a man prays Fajr with three rakahs, seeking to draw closer to Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, his prayer is not valid.

.....

.....

﴿ ٱهۡدِنَا ٱلصِّرَٰطَ ٱلۡمُسۡتَقِيمَ ٦ صِرَٰطَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَنۡعَمۡتَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ غَيۡرِ ٱلۡمَغۡضُوبِ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَلَا ٱلضَّآلِّينَ ٧ ﴾

{Guide us to the straight path. The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray}

When the worshipper has finished praising Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, it is appropriate to follow that with supplication and asking for what he wants, as is mentioned in the hadith narrated by Muslim: **«Half of it is for My slaves, and My slave will have what he asks for.»** So the worshipper asks for what he and his fellow Muslims need, and says:

{Guide us to the straight path [ihdina as-siraat al-mustaqeem]}. Guidance here includes both guidance in the sense of being enabled to know what the straight path is, and guidance in the sense of being enabled to act and adhere to it. This is the point of omitting the preposition ila (to) [which is omitted in the original Arabic, although the word "to" appears in the translation], so He did not say "Ihdina ila as-sirat." In the original text, the verb is connected directly to the object, so as to include both types of guidance.

With regard to the straight path, Ibn Jareer said: The ummah and all commentators are unanimously agreed that the *{straight path}* is the clear path in which there is no crookedness.

That is also clear on the basis of the Arabic language spoken by all the Arabs; examples of that appear in classical Arabic poetry.

The commentators differed in the words they used to describe what is meant by as-sirat (the path). So it was said that it is the Book of Allah, Islam, the Prophet صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, the truth, and the Qur'an.

All of these interpretations boil down to one thing, **which is adhering to the commands of Allah and His Messenger** صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

So whoever follows the Prophet صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ has followed the truth, and whoever follows the truth has followed Islam.

{The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor} This is a description of *{the straight path}*.

Those upon whom Allah has bestowed favour are those who are mentioned in the verse: *{And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions}* [an-Nisa 4:69].

Ibn Jareer at-Tabari said: *{Guide us to the straight path}* means: Enable us to remain steadfast in adhering to that with which You are pleased and to which You guided those of Your slaves on whom You bestowed favour in word and deed.

{not of those who have evoked [Your] anger} namely the Jews and everyone who learns of the truth and does not act upon it.

{or of those who are astray} namely the Christians before the sending of the Prophet ﷺ, and everyone who follows something other than the truth because he was ignorant of the path of truth.

In other words, not the path of those who have **incurred divine wrath**, who are the ones whose desires are corrupt, for they recognized the truth and turned away from it;

and not the path of those who **have gone astray**, who are the ones who have no knowledge, so they are wandering blindly in their misguidance, unable to find the path of truth.

The wording emphasizes the fact that there are two corrupt paths, namely the path of the Jews and the path of the Christians.

Both the Jews and the Christians have gone astray and are subject to divine wrath,

but being subject to divine wrath is one of the main characteristics of the Jews, as Allah says of them: *{those whom Allah has cursed and with whom He became angry}* [al-Ma'idah 5:60].

The main characteristic of the Christians is that they have gone astray, as Allah says: *{a people who had gone astray before and misled many and have strayed from the soundness of the way}* [al-Ma'idah 5:77].

Important Note

1. What is required after worshipping and seeking help is to follow the laws and teachings of Islam. Hence the worshipper asks his Lord to guide him to that and enable him to learn about it and adhere to it.

2. It is a warning against innovation and following crooked paths.

3. It is an affirmation of prophethood, because one cannot learn about the straight path except through revelation.

4. The aqeedah (belief, doctrine) of the believers is one; it is not different paths. The causes of drifting away from the straight path include ignorance and stubbornness.

5. The disbelief of the Jews is greater than the disbelief of the Christians, because they knew the truth but they went against it and fought it. As for the Christians, they were unaware of it and opposed it. Hence being subject to divine wrath is one of the main characteristics of the Jews, whereas misguidance is one of the main characteristics of the Christians.

6. The path of the people of faith upon whom Allah has bestowed favour is to combine knowledge of the truth with acting in accordance with it.

7. This is a refutation of those who speak of bringing religions closer together or the possibility of uniting the religions, for the people of truth cannot bridge the gap with those who are subject to divine wrath and curses.

Shaykh as-Sa'di رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ said:

Although this surah is brief, it contains that which no other surah of the Quran contains.

It refers to the three types of Tawhid (affirmation of the Oneness of Allah):

Tawhid ar-rububiyah (affirmation of the Oneness of divine Lordship) is seen in the verse *{the Lord of the worlds}*.

Tawhid al-uluhiyah (affirmation of the Oneness of divinity), which refers to worshipping Allah Alone, is seen in the word {Allah} and the phrase *{It is You we worship}*.

Tawhid al-asma wa's-sifat (affirmation of the Oneness of the divine names and attributes), which means affirming that the attributes of perfection belong to Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ Alone, which He ascribed to Himself and which His Messenger affirmed, without denying the apparent meanings or likening Him to His creation.

It affirms Prophethood in the words *{Guide us to the straight path}*, because that guidance is not possible without sending messengers.

It affirms recompense for deeds in the words *{Sovereign of the Day of Recompense}*, and tells us that the recompense will be on the basis of justice, because this is the meaning of the word deen (translated here as recompense); that is, recompense on the basis of justice.

It affirms the divine decree and tells us that humans act on the basis of free will, which is contrary to the views of the Qadaris and Jabaris.

In fact, it refutes all the followers of innovation [and misguidance] in the verse *{Guide us to the straight path}* because guidance to the straight path means knowing the truth and acting upon it, but everyone who follows innovation and misguidance does the opposite of that.

It speaks of being sincere towards Allah in terms of worship and seeking help, in the verse *{It is You we worship and You we ask for help}*.

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

Activities

1. Explain what is meant by the path in this verse.

.....

2. Explain the two types of guidance that we may learn from the words *{Guide us}*.

.....

.....

3. Choose the right answer:

- The one who learns the truth and conceals it is like:
  (the Jews) – (the Christians) – (the polytheist Arabs [mushrikeen]).
- The one who acts without knowledge is like:
  (the Muslims) – (the Christians) – (the idol worshippers).

4. Correct the following statements.

- It is not valid to describe the Jews as misguided.

.....

- The believer needs only one type of guidance.

.....

3

Ayat al-Kursi

In this unit we will study

Its virtues

It was narrated from Ubay ibn Ka'b that the Prophet asked him which verse in the Book of Allah is the greatest? He said: Allah and His Messenger know best. He repeated it several times, then he said: Ayat al-Kursi. He said: **«I congratulate you for the knowledge you have, O Abu'l-Mundhir.»**

The virtue of acting in accordance with it

It was narrated that Abu Umamah said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **«Whoever recites Ayat al-Kursi following every obligatory prayer, nothing will stand between him and entering Paradise except his death.»** Narrated by an-Nasai in Amal al-Yawm wa'l-Laylah.

Its most significant lessons

- It is a refutation of the extreme Qadaris.
- It is a refutation of the Khawarij and Mutazila, as it affirms intercession (shafa'ah), because the Khawarij and Mutazila denied that intercession could be made for those who commit major sins.
- It affirms that Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ is exalted from eternity to eternity.

Its most important topics

- Affirmation that Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ Alone is God, in the words: *{Allah - there is no deity except Him}.*
- Refuting the belief of the polytheists who associate others with Allah and say that there are other gods besides Him.

Tafsir of Ayat al-Kursi

Its virtues

It was narrated from Ubay ibn Ka'b that the Prophet asked him which verse in the Book of Allah is the greatest? He said: Allah and His Messenger know best. He repeated it several times, then he said: Ayat al-Kursi. He said: **«I congratulate you for the knowledge you have, O Abu'l-Mundhir.»** Narrated by Muslim.

The virtue of acting in accordance with it

In the hadith about zakat, in which the story of Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه is narrated, it says: "When you go to your bed, then recite Ayat al-Kursi, *{Allah - there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence}* until the end of the verse, for then you will continue to have a protector by the command of Allah, and no devil will come near you until morning." Narrated by al-Bukhari.

It was narrated that Abu Umamah said: The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: **«Whoever recites Ayat al-Kursi following every obligatory prayer, nothing will stand between him and entering Paradise except his death.»** Narrated by an-Nasai in Amal al-Yawm wa'l-Laylah; classed as sahih by al-Albani.

﴿ ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ٱلۡحَيُّ ٱلۡقَيُّومُۚ لَا تَأۡخُذُهُۥ سِنَةٞ وَلَا نَوۡمٞۚ لَّهُۥ مَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِۗ مَن ذَا ٱلَّذِي يَشۡفَعُ عِندَهُۥٓ إِلَّا بِإِذۡنِهِۦۚ يَعۡلَمُ مَا بَيۡنَ أَيۡدِيهِمۡ وَمَا خَلۡفَهُمۡۖ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيۡءٖ مِّنۡ عِلۡمِهِۦٓ إِلَّا بِمَا شَآءَۚ وَسِعَ كُرۡسِيُّهُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضَۖ وَلَا يَـُٔودُهُۥ حِفۡظُهُمَاۚ وَهُوَ ٱلۡعَلِيُّ ٱلۡعَظِيمُ ﴾ [البقرة: ٢٥٥]

{Allah - there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what is behind them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great} [al-Baqarah 2:255].

Tafsir

This verse includes ten phrases, each of which is of very great significance.

{Allah - there is no deity except Him}: Allah is al-Ma'luh, that is, the One Who is worshipped on the basis of love and veneration. None is rightfully worshipped except Him, for He is the true God and all types of worship, obedience and devotion should be for Him Alone, because of His perfection, the perfect nature of His attributes and the greatness of His blessings.

Ibn Uthaymeen said: This great sentence emphatically negates true divinity for any except Allah Alone عَزَّوَجَلَّ.

{the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence [al-Hayy al-Qayyoom]} that is, the Ever-Living Who will never die, Who is controlling and running the affairs of what He created. Hence all created things are in need of Him, and He has no need of them; they could not exist except by His command.

This is like the verse: *{And of His signs is that the heaven and earth remain by His command}* [ar-Rum 30:25].

Tafsir continued

As-Sa'di رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ said: These two divine names inherently imply all the other divine names.

The Ever-Living (al-Hayy) is the One Who has perfect life, which implies all attributes of His Essence, such as hearing, sight, knowledge, power, and so on.

The Sustainer of [all] existence (al-Qayyum) is the One Who is self-sustaining and all others are sustained by Him.

This implies all the actions of the Lord of the Worlds, such as doing whatever He wills, rising above the Throne, descending, speaking and saying, creating, granting provision, giving life and death, and all other types of control. All of these are included in the concept that He is the Sustainer of [all] existence. Hence some of the scholars said that these two together form the greatest name of Allah (al-ism al-a'zam) which, if Allah is called upon by it, He will respond, and if He is asked by it, He will give.

{Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep} that is, no sleepiness can overtake Him, according to the view of all the scholars.

Al-Qurtubi said: Drowsiness is when a person cannot keep his eyes open, and when that reaches the heart [and he becomes unaware of his surroundings], then it becomes sleep.

Hence Allah says *{nor sleep}*, because sleep is stronger than drowsiness.

In Sahih Muslim it is narrated that Abu Musa رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُ said: The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ stood before us and uttered four words, saying: **«Indeed Allah does not sleep and it is not appropriate that He should sleep…»**

{To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth} – this is a declaration that all people are His slaves, subject to His dominion and authority, as Allah says elsewhere: *{There is no one in the heavens and earth but that he comes to the Most Merciful as a servant}* [Maryam 19:93].

Tafsir continued

It was said that that Allah did not say "earths" because He had already mentioned the heavens in the plural (samawaat), so there was no need to repeat the plural form. This is similar to the verse, *{… and [He] made the darkness [zulumaat, lit. "darknesses"] and the light}* [al-An'am 6:1]; He did not say lights.

{Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission?}. In linguistic terms, **shafa'ah (intercession)** refers to making that which is odd-numbered (witr) even (shaf').

In Islamic terminology, it means to mediate for someone else in order to bring him some benefit or ward off some harm from him.

No one can intercede with Allah, because of His perfect might, majesty and pride, so no one would dare to intercede with Him except with His permission to do so.

Even the highest of people in status before Allah will not intercede except with the permission of Allah. Hence on the Day of Resurrection, the Prophet ﷺ, who is the highest of all people in status before Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, will nevertheless not intercede except with the permission of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ.

This is like the verse: *{And how many angels there are in the heavens whose intercession will not avail at all except [only] after Allah has permitted [it] to whom He wills and approves}* [an-Najm 53:26].

When Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ wants to show mercy to whomever He wills of His slaves, He will give permission to whomever He wants to honour among His slaves to intercede for him, but the intercessor will not start to intercede before he has been given permission.

In the hadith, it says that it will be said to the Prophet ﷺ: **«Raise your head and speak, you will be heard; intercede, your intercession will be accepted.»** Narrated by Muslim.

{He knows what is [presently] before them and what is behind them} – this indicates that His knowledge encompasses all that exists.

{what is [presently] before them} refers to the future and the present;

{and what is behind them} refers to the past.

Tafsir continued

This is like what Allah says about the angels: *{[Gabriel said], "And we [angels] descend not except by the order of your Lord. To Him belongs that before us and that behind us and what is in between"}* [Maryam 19:64].

{and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills} that is, no one will learn anything of the knowledge of Allah except what Allah tells him and teaches him.

It was said that people do not encompass any knowledge of His Essence; in other words they do not know about Allah's names, attributes and actions, except what He wills to tell them, so they learn it.

{His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth} the Kursi is the place for the Feet.

It was narrated that Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهما said: "The Kursi is the place for the Feet, and no one could give the Throne its true estimate." Narrated by Abdullah ibn al-Imam Ahmad in as-Sunnah; classed as sahih by al-Albani.

This report is deemed to be marfu [attributable to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم], because this is not something that could be worked out on the basis of personal opinion.

Most of Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah believe that the Kursi is the place for the Feet of Allah عز وجل. This was stated by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim and other scholars.

This is indicative of Allah's perfect might and vast power, because this is the case with regard to the Kursi, that it extends over the heavens and the earth, despite their vastness and the vastness of all that they contain, and the Kursi is not the biggest of Allah's creations; rather there is something greater than it, namely the Throne, and what no one knows except Allah عز وجل.

Tafsir continued.

{and their preservation tires Him not}. That is, the preservation of the heavens and the earth, and everyone in them and between them, is not burdensome for Him; rather that is easy for Him, for He is the maintainer of every soul, [knowing] what it has earned, the Watcher over all things.

{And He is the Most High}, **the Most High** in His essence above His Throne.

He is the Most High in that He subjugates and controls all of His creation.

He is the Most High because of the perfect nature of His attributes.

{the Most Great} in comparison to Whose greatness the might of the tyrants is as nothing, and in contrast to His majesty, powerful kings are brought low. Glory be to the One to Whom belong immense might, great pride and subjugation of all things.

As-Sa'di رَحِمَهُ ٱللَّهُ said: This verse refers to the Oneness of divinity (Tawhid al-Uluhiyah), the Oneness of the divine Lordship (Tawhid ar-Rububiyah) and the Oneness of the divine names and attributes (Tawhid al-Asma wa's-Sifat). It also refers to His all-encompassing sovereignty and knowledge, and to the greatness of His power, majesty, glory, might and pride, and His exaltedness above all His creation. This verse on its own highlights belief in the names and attributes of Allah, and implies all the beautiful names and sublime attributes of Allah.

What we learn from this verse

This verse contains a number of lessons:

1

It affirms these five divine names: **Allah**, **al-Hayy (the Ever- Living)**, **al-Qayyum (the Sustainer of [all] existence)**, **al-Aliy (the Most High)** and **al-Azeem (the Most Great)**, and what they imply of other divine attributes.

2

It affirms the divine attribute of life, which is perfect life that was not preceded by non-existence, will not be followed by demise and is not subject to any imperfection, as Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{He is the First and the Last, the Ascendant and the Intimate, and He is, of all things, Knowing}* [al-Hadeed 57:3].

3

It mentions negated attributes (that cannot be ascribed to Him), as He says: *{Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep}* and *{and their preservation tires Him not}*. The negated attributes are those that Allah has clearly stated that He does not possess, and they imply the perfection of their opposites. Therefore the fact that He does not sleep implies the perfect nature of His life and self-sustenance and sustenance of all that exists; the fact that He is not unjust implies His perfect justice.

4

It offers consolation to the individual at the time of calamities, and makes him accept the divine will and decree, because when he knows that all sovereignty belongs to Allah Alone, he will be content with His decree, and he will submit and surrender to it.

5

It is a refutation of the extreme Qadaris, because Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{He knows what is [presently] before them and what is behind them}*. Affirming that Allah's knowledge is all-encompassing is a refutation of them, because the extreme Qadaris denied that Allah has knowledge of the deeds of His creation until those deeds take place.

6

It is a refutation of the Khawarij and Mutazila, because those groups deny intercession for people who commit major sins, due to their belief that the one who commits major sin will abide forever in the Fire and intercession will not benefit him.

More lessons from this verse

7

Benefit It affirms that Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ is exalted from eternity to eternity, and that *{the Most High}* is an attribute which is indicative of something constant and unchanging.

According to Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah, the exaltedness of Allah may be divided into two categories:

1 He is exalted in His Essence, meaning that He Himself عَزَّوَجَلَّ is above all things. This is proven in the Quran and Sunnah, and by the consensus of the salaf, reason and sound human thinking. This evidence is discussed in detail in the books of aqeedah.

Two groups disagreed with them:

> **The first** group was those who say that Allah Himself is everywhere in the heavens and earth. **These are the immanentists** [those who believe in hulul, the idea that Allah is immanent, or resides, in His creation] among the Jahamis and those who agreed with them. Their view is false according to the Quran and Sunnah, and the consensus of the salaf, reason and sound human thinking.
>
> **The second** group said that He cannot be described as being exalted or anything else, so He is not above the universe or beneath it; He is not to the right or to the left; and He is not connected to it or separate from it. Such a view will end up describing Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ as entirely non-existent, because there is nothing in existence but it is above or below or to the right or to the left or connected or separate. **These people are the ones who deny the divine attributes.**

2 He is exalted in a metaphoric sense, meaning that His attributes are perfect in all respects, and no one is equal to Him in that. This is something on which all the groups of the ummah are agreed upon.

8

It is a warning against transgressing against others, because Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{And He is the Most High, the Most Great}*. Hence Allah says in Surat an-Nisa: *{But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand}* [an-Nisa 4:34]. So if you think highly of yourself, then remember how high and exalted Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ is; if you think of yourself as great, then remember the greatness of Allah; if you feel proud of yourself, then remember the pride of Allah.

Activities

1. **Which verse in the book of Allah is the greatest?**

.....

2. **Mention two times when it is Sunnah to recite Ayat al-Kursi.**

.....

.....

3. **Why is** *{the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence [al-Hayy al-Qayyoom]}*. **the greatest name of Allah according to some scholars?**

.....

.....

4. **This verse affirms five of the names of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ. They are:**

..... **and** ..... **and** .....

..... **and** ..... **and** .....

4

The final verses of Surat al-Baqarah

In this unit we will study

Their virtues

Muslim narrated in his Sahih from Ibn Abbas that Jibreel said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: **"Glad tidings of two lights that have been given to you and were never given to any prophet before you: the Opening of the Book and the closing verses of Surat al-Baqarah. You will never recite one letter of them but you will be given (reward)."**

The virtue of acting in accordance with these verses

It was narrated that Abu Mas'ud رضي الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **«Whoever recites the last two verses of Surat al-Baqarah in a night, they will suffice him.»**

The most important lessons from these verses

- It is essential to affirm that Allah عز وجل Alone is divine and that He Alone is to be worshipped.
- The knowledge of Allah تبارك وتعالى encompasses all things.
- They affirm that people will be brought to account.
- One of the characteristics of the believers is that they hear and obey.

Main topics of the verses

- Highlighting the vastness of Allah's dominion and sovereignty.
- Allah تبارك وتعالى knows what is secret and yet more hidden.
- These verses highlight how the believers should be.
- They highlight the vastness of Allah's mercy towards the ummah of Muhammad ﷺ.

The final verses of Surat al-Baqarah

﴿لِّلَّهِ مَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِۗ وَإِن تُبۡدُواْ مَا فِيٓ أَنفُسِكُمۡ أَوۡ
تُخۡفُوهُ يُحَاسِبۡكُم بِهِ ٱللَّهُۖ فَيَغۡفِرُ لِمَن يَشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَآءُۗ وَٱللَّهُ
عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيۡءٖ قَدِيرٌ ٢٨٤ ءَامَنَ ٱلرَّسُولُ بِمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيۡهِ مِن رَّبِّهِۦ
وَٱلۡمُؤۡمِنُونَۚ كُلٌّ ءَامَنَ بِٱللَّهِ وَمَلَٰٓئِكَتِهِۦ وَكُتُبِهِۦ وَرُسُلِهِۦ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيۡنَ
أَحَدٖ مِّن رُّسُلِهِۦۚ وَقَالُواْ سَمِعۡنَا وَأَطَعۡنَاۖ غُفۡرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيۡكَ
ٱلۡمَصِيرُ ٢٨٥ لَا يُكَلِّفُ ٱللَّهُ نَفۡسًا إِلَّا وُسۡعَهَاۚ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتۡ وَعَلَيۡهَا
مَا ٱكۡتَسَبَتۡۗ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذۡنَآ إِن نَّسِينَآ أَوۡ أَخۡطَأۡنَاۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحۡمِلۡ
عَلَيۡنَآ إِصۡرٗا كَمَا حَمَلۡتَهُۥ عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبۡلِنَاۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلۡنَا مَا
لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِۦۖ وَٱعۡفُ عَنَّا وَٱغۡفِرۡ لَنَا وَٱرۡحَمۡنَآۚ أَنتَ مَوۡلَىٰنَا فَٱنصُرۡنَا
عَلَى ٱلۡقَوۡمِ ٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ ٢٨٦﴾ [البقرة: ٢٨٤-٢٨٦]

{To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it. Then He will forgive whom He wills and punish whom He wills, and Allah is over all things competent. The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, [saying], "We make no distinction between any of His messengers." And they say, "We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination." Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned. "Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us. You are our protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people"} [al-Baqarah 2:284-286].

The reason for revelation

Muslim narrated in his Sahih that Abu Hurayrah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said: When the verse *{To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it. Then He will forgive whom He wills and punish whom He wills, and Allah is over all things competent}* [al-Baqarah 2:284] was revealed to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ were very distressed by that. So they came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, then they knelt down and said: O Messenger of Allah, we were enjoined to do deeds that we were able to do, such as prayer, fasting, jihad and charity. Now there has come down to you this verse, and it is beyond our capacity. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **«Do you want to say as the people of the two Books before you said: we hear and we disobey? Rather say: 'We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination'.»**

They said: We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination.

When the people recited these words, they submitted verbally, then straight after that, Allah revealed the words: *{The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, [saying], "We make no distinction between any of His messengers." And they say, "We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination."}* [al-Baqarah 2:285]. When they did that, Allah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ abrogated it [v. 284]. Then Allah revealed the words: *{Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned. "Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred."}* Allah said: Yes. *{"Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us."}* He said: Yes. *{"Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear."}* He said: Yes. *{"And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us. You are our protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people."}* He said: Yes.

The virtue of these verses

Muslim narrated in his Sahih from Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهما that Jibreel said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: **"Glad tidings of two lights that have been given to you and were never given to any prophet before you: the Opening of the Book and the closing verses of Surat al-Baqarah. You will never recite one letter of them but you will be given (reward)."**

It was narrated that Abu Dharr said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **«I have been given the final verses of Surat al-Baqarah, part of the treasure beneath the Throne which was not given to any prophet before me.»** Narrated by Ahmad; classed as sahih by al-Albani.

It was narrated that Abu Mas'ud رضي الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **«Whoever recites the last two verses of Surat al-Baqarah at night, they will suffice him.»** Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Tafsir

{To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth} that is, Allah is the Sovereign of everything in the heavens and everything on earth, great and small. He has control of it all, He disposes of its affairs and nothing of it is hidden from Him, for He is its controller and owner, and the disposer of its affairs.

{Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it}. There was a great scholarly dispute regarding the interpretation of this verse. We have noted above that when it was revealed, it caused great distress for the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم; they were very anxious about it and were afraid of Allah's bringing them to account for their deeds, both great and small, even what crossed their minds.

But Allah عز وجل followed that with the verse: *{Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned}*. Thus He told them that He will overlook whatever thoughts cross their minds, but they will be held accountable for their deeds.

Tafsir continued

Ibn Abbas رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا said: These intrusive thoughts that cross the mind are something that the Muslims cannot avoid, but the matter was settled when Allah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ decreed that the soul will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned in word and deed.

According to a hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: **«Allah has pardoned my ummah for whatever intrusive thoughts cross their minds, so long as they do not act upon them or speak of them.»** Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

In as-Sahihayn it is narrated from him [Abu Hurayrah] that the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: **«Allah said: 'If My slave thinks of doing a bad deed, do not record it against him…'»**

{Then He will forgive whom He wills} – **forgiveness** is concealment of sins accompanied by pardoning thereof, because the word ghafara (forgive) is taken from the word al-mighfar (helmet), which is what a fighter wears on his head to protect it from arrows, so it both covers the head and protects it.

{and [He will] punish whom He wills} that is, He will punish whomever He wills for his sins for which nothing happened to him that would dictate that they should be expiated or forgiven.

{and Allah is over all things competent} – nothing is beyond Him; rather all of creation are under His control and subject to His will. Therefore nothing is beyond Allah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ, as He says elsewhere: *{But Allah is not such that anything can escape Him in the heavens or on the earth}* [Fatir 35:44].

What we learn from the verse

1

It is obligatory to affirm that Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ is the only God and to worship Him Alone, because affirming His Lordship (rububiyah) dictates affirming His divinity (uluhiyah). Hence Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you}* [al-Baqarah 2:21]. The fact that Allah is the Lord (Rabb), which is manifested in His power of creation, dictates that He Alone is to be worshipped. In Surat an-Naml, Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{is He [not best] who created the heavens and the earth … Is there a deity with Allah?}* [an-Naml 27:60]. In other words, if He is the only One Who did what is mentioned [in the verse], namely creating, controlling, granting provision and so on, then He is the only One Who is divine and deserving of worship (ilaah).

2

Affirming that the heavens are more than one; they are seven according to the text of the Quran and Sunnah, and scholarly consensus. *{Say, "Who is Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Great Throne?"}* [al-Mu'minun 23:86].

As for the earth, it is mentioned in the singular in the Quran, but it is mentioned in the plural in the Sunnah. The number of earths is also seven. That is mentioned in clear texts of the Sunnah and is in accordance with the apparent meaning of the Quran: *{It is Allah who has created seven heavens and of the earth, the like of them}* [at-Talaq 65:12]. That is because if we say that they are like them in description, that is not possible, so the only option left is to say that they are like them in number.

In the Sunnah, the Prophet صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: **«Whoever usurps a handspan of land unlawfully, Allah will encircle his neck with it on the Day of Resurrection to the depth of seven earths.»** Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Activities

1. *{Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it}*. **What is this verse warning against?**
2. **What is the evidence for the number of earths being seven?**
3. **How does this verse prove the oneness of divinity (Tawhid al-uluhiyah)?**

{The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers}. In other words, the Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, namely the Book and wisdom – which are the Quran and Sunnah – belief in such a way that leads to acceptance of and compliance with the rulings. It is not merely believing and affirming, for that is of no benefit. Abu Talib affirmed and believed that Muhammad ﷺ was a Messenger, but because he did not accept and comply with the teachings of Islam, his affirmation did not benefit him, and he is one of the people of Hell.

Belief, according to Islamic teachings is: affirmation in such a way that one will accept and comply [with the rulings].

{from his Lord} – what is meant by Lordship (rububiyah) here is Lordship in the most specific sense.

That is because the Lordship (rububiyah) of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ is: general, specific and most specific.

His general Lordship refers to His being the Lord and Cherisher of all creation, as He says: *{Lord of the worlds}* [al-Fatihah 1:1].

His specific Lordship refers to His being the Lord and Cherisher of the believers. For example, the believers say in their supplication: *{But among them is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good…"}* [al-Baqarah 2:201].

His most specific Lordship refers to His being the Lord and Cherisher of the Messengers. For example, He عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{The Lord of Moses and Aaron}* [al-A'raf 7:122].

Similar to that is the concept of servitude or being slaves of Allah (ubudiyah), which may also be divided into general, specific and most specific.

An example of general servitude is mentioned in the verse: *{There is no one in the heavens and earth but that he comes to the Most Merciful as a servant}* [Maryam 19:93].

Specific servitude is mentioned in the verse: *{And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth easily}* [al-Furqan 25:63].

The most specific servitude is mentioned in the verse: *{Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His Servant}* [al-Furqan 25:1].

Then it was Allah's will that the ummah of Muhammad ﷺ should share this honour and virtue, as He says:

{All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers}. Here Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ is speaking of the faith of both the Messenger and those who believed with him, and their submission and obedience.

For Your Information

This includes belief in Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, and belief in everything that He has told us about Himself, and that His messengers have told us about Him, including His perfect and majestic attributes in general terms and in detail. It also includes believing that He is far above resembling His creation, He is far above having any shortcomings, and His attributes are not to be denied. Thus that includes believing in His existence, His Lordship (rububiyah), His divinity (uluhiyah), and His names and attributes.

It includes believing in the angels of whom the religious texts speak in general and in detail.

It includes believing in the Books and what they contain of stories, commands and prohibitions. We do not know of any of the previous Books by name except a few, which include: The Quran, the Torah, the Gospel, the Zabur and the scriptures of Ibrahim and Musa.

It includes believing in the messengers. We do not make any distinction between any of them; rather we believe in all of them, for they were messengers between Allah and His slaves. Therefore disbelieving in one of them is disbelieving in all of them and, in fact, is disbelieving in Allah.

Benefit This is one of the basic principles of the Islamic religion, to believe in all of the Prophets. Whoever believes in Muhammad صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, follows him, and adheres to all the teachings of Islam, but disbelieves in Musa عَلَيْهِ ٱلسَّلَامُ or Isa عَلَيْهِ ٱلسَّلَامُ or any of the other Prophets of Allah is a disbeliever in Muhammad صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, for disbelieving in one Prophet is disbelieving in the entire concept of Prophethood.

{We make no distinction between any of His messengers}. So we do not do as the people of the Book did, who believed in some of them and disbelieved in others.

{And they say, "We hear and we obey"} that is, we **hear** what You say, what You have **commanded** us to do and what You have forbidden to us, and we obey You in that, and they were not of those who said: we hear and we disobey.

This is how the Muslim should be in response to the commands and prohibitions of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ – he should hear and obey.

Because people will inevitably fall short in their duties towards Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ, and they need His forgiveness at all times, they said:

{[We seek] Your forgiveness} that is, we ask You for forgiveness for shortcomings in fulfilling our duties towards Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ.

With regard to duties and what we owe to other people, it must be fulfilled in this world, before the Hereafter.

{and to You is the [final] destination} that is, to You we will return, then You will bring all people to account and requite them accordingly.

What we learn from the verse

1. The knowledge of Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ encompasses all things. *{Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it}*. This is like the verses in which Allah says: *{Say, "Whether you conceal what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah knows it"}* [Aal Imran 3:29] and *{He knows the secret and what is [even] more hidden}* [Ta-Ha 20:7].

2. Affirmation that people will be brought to account, because Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{Allah will bring you to account for it}*. So each individual should be wise and take stock of himself before he is brought to account.

3. Affirmation of the divine will, because Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{Then He will forgive whom He wills and punish whom He wills}*. His will is characterized by wisdom, hence Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{And you do not will except that Allah wills. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise}* [al-Insan 76:30].

4. One of the characteristics of the believers is that they hear and obey, hence Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{And they say, "We hear and we obey"}*. This is like the verses in which Allah says:

   {The only statement of the [true] believers when they are called to Allah and His Messenger to judge between them is that they say, "We hear and we obey." And those are the successful. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger and fears Allah and is conscious of Him - it is those who are the attainers} [an-Nur 24:51-52]

   {It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice about their affair}[al-Ahzab 33:36].

Activities

1. **The verse clearly refers to four of the pillars of faith. Find a fifth pillar in the verse.**
2. **Find another verse from another surah with the same meaning:**

The verse referred to:	Find another verse which indicates the same meaning.
{Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it}	
{And they say, "We hear and we obey"}	

{Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity}. We noted above that the Muslims found it hard to think that Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ would bring them to account for what crossed their hearts and minds, and that they would be blamed for it. That was followed by this verse.

What this means is: Allah will not burden any soul with that which it has no capacity to bear, because it is impossible for it, like requiring a paralyzed person to walk, or a blind person to see, or enjoining acts of worship that a person does not have the strength to do, or ordaining calamities that he is not able to bear.

{It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained} that is, each soul will have what it has earned of good.

{and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned} that is, of evil or bad deeds.

In these verses, the word kasaba (translated here as gain) is used to refer to good, to indicate that there are good deeds that may be attained with minimum effort; and in fact they may be attained by merely intending in one's heart to do them.

And the word iktasaba (translated here as earn) is used with regard to bad deeds, to indicate that bad deeds will not be recorded against a person unless he does them.

{Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred} that is, Our Lord, do not punish us if we forget or make mistakes.

The difference between forgetting and making mistakes:

Forgetting is when a person was enjoined to do slips his mind, so he omits to do it out of forgetfulness.

Making mistakes is when a person intends to do something permissible, then finds himself doing something that is not permissible for him to do.

According to the hadith of Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهما, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: **«Indeed Allah has forgiven my ummah for mistakes and forgetfulness, and what they are forced to do.»** Narrated by Ibn Majah; classed as sahih by al-Albani.

{Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us}. **The word translated** here as burden refers to a heavy load that makes the bearer unable to move, and keeps him in his place because of its heavy weight.

What is meant here is enjoining of that which is hard and difficult to do.

It was also said that this word refers to heavy labour.

In other words, they asked Allah عز وجل not to burden them with heavy duties like He enjoined on the previous nations.

It is proven in Sahih Muslim from Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: **«Allah said: "Yes."»**

In Sahih Muslim it is narrated from Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهما that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: **«Allah said: "I have granted that."»**

{Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear} that is, do not oblige us to do deeds that we are not able to do.

{And pardon us} that is, for what You know of our shortcomings and errors with regard to matters between us and You.

{and forgive us} that is, with regard to matters between us and Your slaves; do not let them find out about our misdeeds and abhorrent actions.

{and have mercy upon us} that is, in the future, so by Your help, do not let us fall into another sin.

Hence it was said that the sinner needs three things:

- **for Allah to pardon him for matters between that person and Him;**
- **for Allah to conceal his sin from His slaves and not expose his sin to them;**
- **for Allah to protect him so that he will not fall into a similar sin.**

This is part of Allah's care for the ummah of Muhammad ﷺ, that He inspired them to offer this supplication and ask for pardon, forgiveness and mercy.

{You are our protector [Mawlana]} that is, You are our supporter [waliyyuna] and our helper; in You we put our trust and Your help we seek.

The wilayah [care and protection] of Allah is of two types: specific and general.

His specific wilayah is for the believers, as mentioned in the verses: *{Allah is the ally [wali] of those who believe. He brings them out from darknesses into the light}* [al-Baqarah 2:257].

{And Allah is the ally [wali] of the believers} [Aal Imran 3:68].

His general wilayah is His care for everyone, as mentioned in the verse: *{and they will be returned to Allah, their master [mawlahum], the Truth, and lost from them is whatever they used to invent}* [Yunus 10:30].

{so give us victory over the disbelieving people} that is, those who reject Your religion, and deny Your oneness and the message of Your Prophet, and worship other than You.

What we learn from the verse

1

Affirmation of the well-known principle of the scholars, which is that nothing is obligatory when one is incapable, and nothing is prohibited in the case of necessity, because Allah says: *{Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity}*.

But if there is an alternative to the obligation that a person is unable to do, then he must do the alternative; if he is unable to do the alternative, then it is waived. If there is no alternative, then it is waived.

For example, if he is unable to purify himself with water, the obligation to purify himself with water is waived, but he must move to the option of tayammum. If he is not able to do that either, then tayammum is also waived.

If someone is detained and chained up, and is unable to do either wudu or tayammum, then he may pray without wudu or tayammum.

Another example is the waiving of prohibitions in cases of necessity. If a man is compelled to eat dead meat [that which was not slaughtered in the prescribed manner] because he cannot find anything else to eat, then it becomes permissible for him to eat it. If he hopes that he will find halal food soon, then he should limit himself to eating only enough to keep him going; if he does not have that hope, then he may eat his fill and he may keep some of it with him [to eat later].

2

Whatever a person does, he does it on the basis of his own choice and free will, because Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity}*. This is a refutation of the Jabaris who say that a person has no free will with regard to what he does.

3

The individual should ask Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ for well-being, and not to burden him with that which is beyond him. This is a refutation of the Sufis who say: we do not ask Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ to protect us from that which is too hard for us, because we are His slaves, and if we go through some difficulties and hardships, we will bear it with patience in order to earn reward.

4

There is no blame in the case of forgetting or ignorance, because Allah عَزَّوَجَلَّ says: *{Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred}*. Allah, عَزَّوَجَلَّ said: **«I have granted that,»** as narrated in the hadith quoted above.

For Your Information

There are some issues that arise:

Firstly: with regard to the things that are enjoined:

Whoever omits an obligatory duty out of forgetfulness or ignorance must make it up, and the requirement to do it is not waived.

- Hence the Prophet ﷺ said: **«Whoever forgets a prayer, let him offer it as soon as he remembers it.»** Agreed upon.
- When the man who prayed hastily finished his prayer, the Prophet ﷺ said to him: **«Go back and pray, for you have not prayed.»** Agreed upon. He did not excuse him for not knowing, even though the man said that he did not know how to do any better than that.

Secondly: with regard to things that are prohibited:

Whoever does such things out of **ignorance or because he forgot**, there is no sin on him and no expiation is required.

- For example, if he eats when he is fasting, because he forgot, there is no sin on him, because the Prophet ﷺ said: **«Whoever forgets he is fasting and eats or drinks, let him complete his fast.»** Agreed upon. This person did an action that is prohibited when fasting, namely eating and drinking, out of forgetfulness, but he was not instructed to do anything else.
- The same applies if a person eats whilst he is fasting because he does **not know what time it is**. That is because Asma bint Abi Bakr رضي الله عنها said: "We broke the fast at the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on a cloudy day, then the sun broke through the clouds." Narrated by al-Bukhari. But they were not instructed to make up that fast, even though they had done something that was not allowed, because they had not known what time it was.

Thirdly: if a person commits a prohibited act knowing that it is prohibited, but not knowing of its consequences:

The burden of sin is not waived in his case, and neither are the consequences of his action.

- For example, if someone who is fasting has intercourse during the day in Ramadan, and he is aware of the prohibition but he does not know that expiation is required of him. In that case he is sinning, and must offer that expiation, because of what is narrated in the hadith of Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه in as-Sahihayn that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: O Messenger of Allah, I am doomed! He said: **«What has doomed you?»** He said: I had intercourse with my wife whilst I was fasting. The Prophet ﷺ ordered him to offer expiation, because he was aware of the ruling, based on the fact that he said: I am doomed.

Activities

1. The words *{Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it}* were revealed, and the Sahabah were distressed by that. Then the words *{Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned}* were revealed, and the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم were reassured by that. How does the second verse indicate that what the Sahabah had been distressed about in the first verse was abrogated and alleviated by the second verse?

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.....

.....

.....

2. "Our religion is easy." Explain this saying, based on what you have studied.

.....

.....

3. Put a (✓) or (✗) after the following statements:

   a. The fact that people will be called to account for forgetting or not knowing means that the requirement to do the action that was forgotten is waived. ( )

   b. Whoever does any prohibited action out of ignorance is sinning. ( )

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And it is Allah from Whom we seek help.

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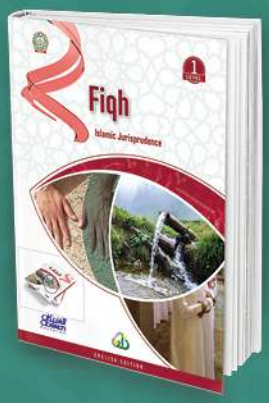

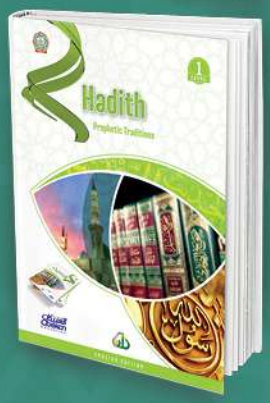

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